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THE ROLE OF PROVERBS IN PRESERVING NATIONAL CULTURAL IDENTITY

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Abstract. This article examines proverbs and sayings as culturally embedded linguistic units that preserve and communicate a community's worldview, values, and accumulated experience. Drawing on a linguocultural perspective, it considers the interaction of language and culture, the conceptual structure of paremiological expressions, and the role of cultural context and background knowledge in interpretation. Particular attention is given to the cumulative function of proverbs, through which collective experience is retained and transmitted across generations, and to their pragmatic role in communicating behavioural expectations. Examples from Uzbek, Russian, and English illustrate how related moral or practical ideas may be expressed through culturally distinctive images. The discussion highlights the value of paremiological units as compact forms of cultural memory and as resources for understanding the relationship between language, values, and a people's perception of the world.

Keywords: proverbs and sayings; paremiological units; linguocultural approach; language and culture; national worldview; concepts; cultural values; cultural context; background knowledge; cumulative function; pragmatic function.

A linguocultural approach to paremiological units is closely associated with the anthropological study of language. From this perspective, language is not an isolated system but a phenomenon inseparable from human existence, social activity, and experience. People's worldviews and practical knowledge are articulated and shared through linguistic forms [Бабушкин, 1997; Вендина, 1999; Постовалова, 1999; Маҳмудов, 2007; Нурмонов, 2010; Худойберганова, 2015].

A.N. Leontyev emphasises the role of language in enabling people to perceive, understand, and respond to reality. Through language, individuals express the experience acquired in social practice [Леонтьев, 1992]. In linguocultural research, language may therefore be understood as a means of conceptualising the world, a component of culture, and a repository through which cultural information and knowledge are preserved and transmitted between generations [Воробьёв, 1997; Кошарная, 1999; Маслова, 1997; Постовалова, 1999; Телия, 1994; Маҳмудов, 2007; Худойберганова, 2015].

Within linguoculturology, culture encompasses shared understandings of the world as well as forms of self-awareness. V.N. Teliya interprets culture as a form of knowledge that reflects people's

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awareness of themselves through their life activities [Телия, 1999]. Culture is thus a multilayered phenomenon connected with language and organised through a system of concepts. It includes explicit knowledge as well as assumptions and associations that may remain below the level of conscious awareness [Воробьёв, 1997; Степанов, 1997; Телия, 1999; Маҳмудов, 2007; Худойберганова, 2015; Сафаров, 2006].

The relationship between language and culture can also be understood through the connection between ideal meanings encoded in linguistic units and spiritual meanings embodied in cultural practices and objects [Маслова, 1977; Тарасов, 1994; Телия, 1996; Маҳмудов, 2007; Нурмонов, 2010; Худойберганова, 2015; Усмонова, 2019]. Linguistic expressions may consequently be viewed as forms through which human knowledge, experience, and ideas become culturally meaningful and communicable.

From this standpoint, proverbs and sayings are not merely fixed expressions. Their internal structure and imagery may reflect the worldview, experience, and evaluative criteria of the community that uses them. As products of collective thought, proverbs often condense shared assumptions about how the world works and how human conduct should be judged. Studying them linguoculturally can therefore shed light on culturally shaped patterns of thought and perception.

Understanding a proverb frequently requires more than knowing the dictionary meanings of its words. Cultural context may include historical, material, geographical, and social information that enables a reader or listener to recognise the associations behind an expression. The literal meanings of a proverb's components remain important: when a word becomes archaic or falls out of common use, the meaning of the whole saying may become less transparent to contemporary speakers [Добровольский, 1996; Черданцева, 1996; Неъматов, 1995; Бердиёров, Расулов, 1984].

Paremiological units may be understood as condensed representations of a community's perception of the world, closely linked to the conceptual system of its language. Concepts provide a cognitive foundation for the national worldview. Proverbs and sayings can thus preserve culturally specific knowledge and experience while expressing how a community interprets and evaluates reality.

The conceptual sphere of a language is important in shaping the imagery and evaluative content associated with national values [Лихачёв, 1993]. Even concepts that are broadly shared across societies may be organised differently under the influence of particular linguistic and cultural traditions. Proverbs are especially revealing in this respect because they compress long-standing beliefs, judgements, stereotypes, and practical experience into brief and memorable forms.

Paremiological units are closely connected with systems of values. They may express universal, national, or group-based ideals, while also signalling disapproval of behaviours and attitudes regarded as undesirable. In this way, proverbs preserve elements of a community's spiritual heritage and transmit moral judgements and social expectations across generations [Мамонтов, 2002].

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Their cultural specificity is often most visible in their imagery. Proverbs from different languages may convey a similar general lesson while drawing on images associated with different historical experiences or cultural practices. Consider the following examples:

Uzbek: “Qari bilganni pari bilmas.”

Russian: “Язык до Киева доведёт.”

English: “Tell that to the marines.”

English: “Many words will not fill a bushel.”

These expressions belong to different linguistic and cultural settings and do not all have identical meanings. Taken together, however, they illustrate how proverbial meaning is shaped by familiar images, shared assumptions, and culture-specific associations. Their interpretation depends on attention to the particular meaning of each saying rather than assuming that all examples are direct equivalents.

From this perspective, proverbs can be considered either strongly marked by a particular ethnic and cultural tradition or relatively culturally neutral. The former make use of historically and culturally specific references, while the latter tend to express more broadly shared moral, ethical, or religious concerns. In practice, the distinction is a matter of degree: even a seemingly universal lesson may be communicated through imagery shaped by a particular culture.

The proverb “Mehmon otangdan ulug‘” provides an example of how a short expression can embody a culturally significant social value. In Uzbek culture, it reflects the high regard accorded to guests and the importance of hospitality. Understanding the proverb fully therefore involves more than translating its individual words; it also requires familiarity with the norms of welcoming, honouring, and caring for guests that are associated with Uzbek cultural life.

This capacity to accumulate and transmit experience is commonly described as the cumulative function of paremiological units. Proverbs preserve practical knowledge developed over long periods and pass it on in concise, memorable forms. For example, “Yetti o‘lchab, bir kes” communicates the value of caution and careful planning before taking action. The saying does not simply state an isolated idea; it encapsulates a practical principle shaped by collective experience and makes it available to later generations.

Proverbs can therefore function as compact forms of cultural memory. Their durability comes partly from their concise structure and figurative force, which help communities recall and reuse accumulated knowledge in everyday life.

In addition to preserving cultural knowledge, proverbs perform a pragmatic function in communication. Their advisory and aphoristic character allows speakers to assess behaviour, express approval or criticism, and encourage particular ways of acting. A proverb can thus influence how an addressee interprets a situation or responds to another person.

For instance, “Kattaga hurmatda bo‘l, kichikka izzatda” promotes respect for older people and considerate treatment of younger people. Used in an appropriate context, it can reinforce a behavioural

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expectation and guide interpersonal relations. Its function is not limited to conveying information: it also seeks to shape the addressee's attitude and conduct. Paremiological units should consequently be studied both as repositories of cultural meaning and as communicative resources that can exert social and interpersonal influence.

A linguocultural perspective reveals proverbs and sayings as compact linguistic forms in which language, collective experience, cultural memory, and social values intersect. Their meanings are shaped not only by lexical content but also by imagery, conceptual associations, historical experience, and the background knowledge required for interpretation.

The examples discussed demonstrate several interconnected functions of paremiological units. They represent a community's worldview, express value judgements, preserve practical and moral experience, transmit cultural knowledge across generations, and influence behaviour in communication. Although proverbs from different languages may convey comparable lessons, their images and cultural implications can vary significantly. A careful analysis must therefore distinguish shared meanings from culture-specific forms of expression and avoid treating superficially similar sayings as exact equivalents.

Proverbs are valuable material for studying how communities conceptualise reality and communicate expectations about social life. Their linguocultural analysis provides insight into both the common concerns that connect different peoples and the particular traditions through which each community interprets the world.

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